

THE MOULD of GOD

By
Morgan Robertson



THEY faced one another in the congressman's parlor, in perhaps the most embarrassing moment of their lives—she with her pretty face pouting with assumed indifference, he with lips twitching, eyes staring, and his face the color of death. In it was the look of a child, suddenly struck, but not yet crying, and the eyes of the girl avoided it.

"You mean it—you really mean it?" he asked brokenly.

"I do," she snapped. "Things are different. Everything is changed. I am sixteen now, and a young lady. I have been brought out at Washington."

"And I," he answered, "may meet you there. Did your father tell you that—"

"Oh, yes," she responded airily, "he told us all yesterday. You have won, by a successful competitive examination, an appointment to Annapolis. And if you pass the entrance examination, you may one day be an officer in the navy, eligible to any society. Oh, yes, I know your prospects; but it will take years to fulfill them."

"And you cannot wait, Nellie, after all my work and study to get this appointment? Nellie, it was for you; I could not have done it but for your promise."

"Promises," she said coldly, "are made to be broken, especially if made by a child."

"They are not," he exclaimed vehemently. "I have kept my promise to you, and—"

"That will do," she interrupted. "Mr. Strong"—she had never addressed him

before by this prefix, and he stiffened under the shock—"you must not annoy me any more. And this scene must end at once. It has become painful."

"And I am not to see you again?"

"No, most decidedly. You have my photograph, I believe; that should be enough."

He picked up his hat from a chair, and slowly moved toward the door, where he turned, intending to say good-by; but she had vanished through the rear portières, and he left the house. As he reached the borders of the front lawn, however, he heard her musical voice at a side window, saying mockingly: "Come again, when you can't stay so long," and then a ripple of girlish laughter.

He did not look back; he closed his teeth tightly, and went on. He halted occasionally, and once leaned against a fence, breathing hard, but looking at the sidewalk. He met and passed a few people, and though they all peered curiously at his white, strained face, he did not see them, nor did he have intelligent cognition of the corners he turned, or the streets he traversed, until he found himself in front of the house where he had boarded—and paid for his board by odd jobs while he went through the high school—and here he pulled himself together and went in. Up in his room he packed his few belongings in a grip, locked the door, and on the way out paid his bill to the landlady, and departed, hardly answering her good-by.

The boy, hugging the heavy grip, made for a country road and began a twelve-mile walk, the objective of

which was the home in which he had been reared as an adopted son, and which contained only one surviving member of the family, a foster sister a few years older than himself, recently widowed, who eked out a slender income by dressmaking. Darkness closed down before he was halfway home because he went slowly.

He was seventeen years old; he had forced his way through the high school in three years, inspired by the affection and prompting of the little beauty, whose father, she had told him, had the appointing of cadets to the naval academy. He had graduated, and later successfully passed the congressman's test examination, winning over the heads of fifty other applicants, and knew, by the congressman's words that day, that he could successfully pass the initial examination into the academy. An honorable career was ahead of him, and as an American naval officer, no society in the world would bar him out. There would be promotion, the income of a gentleman, the respect of his fellow men, and, in the event of war, honor, glory, and plaudits. But none of these appealed to him now. He thought of nothing but his loss, saw nothing but the face, heard nothing but the voice.

Calf love? This was a boy who had never known childhood, and would soon be a man who had never known boyhood; but he was still in the formative stage. He stumbled up the door of his home at ten o'clock, and was welcomed by his foster sister, a pleasant-faced young woman in black, with a two-year-old child at her knees.

"Did you pass, Jack?" she asked, as he entered.

"Yes, I passed, and I suppose I can pass at Annapolis."

"Of course you can," she said gleefully. Then, noticing his face, she asked: "But what's the matter?"

"Nothing, Jennie, nothing," he answered slowly and haltingly. "I walked home—suppose I'm tired—and the mental strain; yes, the mental strain. But it's six weeks before the exam. and I can rest up."

"Well, Jack," she said encouragingly,

"of course the strain must have been hard. Had supper?"

"No, Jen—don't want any. I want to go to bed. I'll be all right in the morning."

He went up to his room, placed his grip, unlocked, on the floor, and undressing, lay down on his bed. But not to sleep. His eyes did not close that night; a face within them and a voice in his ears kept him awake until daylight shone into the room, then he sank into waking stupor, from which he emerged at breakfast time, muttering to himself. Jennie called him, and on getting no intelligent response, entered the room; then she went for a doctor.

"Brain fever," said the man of medicine, when he had listened to his mutterings. "Mental shock of some kind. What's happened to him?"

"Study, anxiety, overwork," answered Jennie. "Is he in danger?"

"Study and worry are not it," said the doctor dubiously. "However, keep him cool and quiet. That is all you can do. He has the head of a general, and the constitution of a government mule. He'll pull through physically; but mentally—no one knows. The cause must be removed, whatever it is."

But the cause was unknown to them, and the mutterings of the patient gave them no light. He pulled through, however, physically and mentally—mentally in all apparent characteristics. In a month he was up, with a ravenous appetite that rebuilt his lost bodily strength, but quieter, with none of his old enthusiasm over his future, and with little memory of the things he had learned at school. His facility at mathematics and his knowledge of languages, history, and the other higher studies, seemed to have gone from him. Yet he felt that they would come back, and he prepared for his trip to Annapolis, repacking his grip with what he would need until the government took charge of him. In the grip was a large, exquisitely finished photograph, which he stared at long and earnestly. Then he put it on the floor, and raised his heel, to grind it out of similitude, but paused, then picked it

up. Going downstairs, he handed it to Jennie.

"Keep it, Jen," he said. "I was going to destroy it, but could not. It's a girl I met in town. It'll make a pretty ornament on your mantel."

"Oh, Jack, isn't she lovely?" exclaimed Jennie, looking intently at the beautiful face. "Do you know her? Who is she?"

"Yes, I knew her. It's the only thing she ever gave me, though I gave——" His voice choked a little, and he added: "Perhaps, some time when I'm home and you're tired of it, I'll burn it up, but not now. It's too pretty."

Jennie, still unenlightened, placed the picture on the mantel, and found the pleasure of envy—known to many women—in regarding the face that excelled her own. Before Jack departed she announced to him that she never grew tired of looking at it.

At Annapolis, he passed in, by a bare escape from failure, and took his place as a fourth-class man, subject to all the petty annoyances and misunderstandings imposed upon "plebes" by their betters. But these did not go far, and ceased when he learned his way; for there was something in the quiet, silent dignity of the boy who never smiled that impressed these upper-class men against all logic and precedent of academy life.

In the place of his lost smile and scholarly attributes something had come to the boy, as it comes to all who suffer and survive the acme of mental pain. Also, there was a sort of reversion, a return to a condition of mind habitual with him when young, and which had left him when in the high school, during which time he was nervous, apprehensive, and anxious to avoid friction and conflict. Now, as when younger, there was an utter absence of fear in his mental make-up. He did not even fear the trying examinations, rousing himself at the last moment by a mighty effort of concentration, and barely passing through by guesses and intuitive answers. As for intelligent, methodical study, it was beyond him. Always, when alone, except in the mo-

ments of concentration, there were in his mind a face and a voice that tormented him, and prevented study. Yet he sought no relief in the diversions of academy life; it was *his* problem, *his* battle, to settle and solve as best he could, but without aid or advice from others.

Thus equipped and handicapped, he passed every examination of the six years term at the foot of the list, and then, with the face and voice still haunting him, he graduated, still at the foot, into the navy as a commissioned officer. That he was not permanently mad by this time was due to nothing but the rapid impact of impressions on the five senses due to the comradeship of five hundred youngsters, and the enforced attention to drill, dress, and the thousand mechanical details of academy life. In physique he was tall, straight, neither light nor dark, but classically handsome—"an animated statue," as one young Annapolis flirt had said after a failure to make him smile; a "tin god," as his new watch-mates described him when his back was turned. But the "tin god" did his work well, and had more influence over the foremast hands than had the terrible executive officer.

While at Annapolis, and during his sea cruise, he had corresponded with his foster sister, but had resolutely abstained from visiting home during vacation time, in spite of her beseeching prayers to come and see the beautiful little girl that was born just after he left. This was the last thing in the world to draw him home. A beautiful little girl would grow up, he knew, and be like other beauties. So, further committed, he went to sea, an ensign of the navy at twenty-three, and a woman hater for life—as he thought.

And he wrote no more to his foster sister.

But seafaring is not compatible with woman hating. It was in the days of the old navy, when sailing was done with sails, when voyages were long from port to port, when social amenities lagged and man palled upon man, when nothing but naval etiquette pre-

vented each officer from voicing his private opinion of the others—all from lack of the inspiring influence of woman's voice and personality. Strong, more introspective than his shipmates, though farther removed, was the first to reduce to law man's need of women. He was dragged, against his will, to an official ball at Malta, and from sheer politeness, danced and talked with belles and beauties; and as he went aboard, and later to sleep, he realized a temporary absence of the face and the voice that had deviled him through the years. He sought the remedy again and again, and though never falling in love, he found a new balance of mind; so that now when he thought of his schoolboy sweetheart's disposal of his case, it was only as an unfortunate, deplorable, and perhaps necessary incident in his development.

And in time her face grew dim and intangible, her voice silent, and at last he could smile. Hence, in the tranquillity of mind coming of this, and in the self-confidence aroused by his successful advancement and promotion to the grade of junior lieutenant, he felt equal to the ordeal of meeting her, and, half-heartedly, sought traces of her at Washington. But not finding her there, he gave it up, taking no thought of the smallness of the world.

He was what is commonly called an "executive man," one who, while inefficient in the higher attributes of scholastic seamanship, was a marvel of efficiency in the lower. He was, all in all, a valuable, practical man who, by several and various exploits in saving canvas, quelling insubordination, handling boats in a seaway, and dominating, by pure force of personality, his superiors of the wardroom, had convinced his captain that he was just the man to put on board a distressed Mediterranean liner, whose signals showed that she was without a navigator and commander.

His ship, a gun-deck sloop, had officers and men to spare, and Strong was told to pick his men and pack his grip. He did the latter, saying he wanted no men, and was about to de-

scend the gangway into a waiting boat, when the captain, his eyes glued to binoculars, called him back.

"A two-flag signal, Mr. Strong," he said. "Wait a minute. 'P. C.,' he says."

Strong waited while a quartermaster picked out from the code book the meaning of "P. C."

"Want assistance. Mutiny," read the quartermaster.

"Mutiny," grunted the captain. "Mr. Strong, take as many men as you want. Pick out your best bluejackets, and take a corporal and file of marines, if you like."

"Bluejackets will do, sir," answered Strong, with the line officer's contempt for the sea soldier. "May I have a dozen, sir?"

"All you want. Two dozen, three dozen, six dozen. Get that ship into port, and join us by steamer."

Not only six dozen but the whole complement of men in that gun-deck sloop volunteered for the trip with Jack Strong, as the men called him; but he chose only his dozen, and with these twelve muscular and jubilant man-of-war's men, armed with pistol and cutlass, preceding him into the boat, he descended with his grip, and was pulled toward the steamer, wallowing with dead fires in the trough of the sea.

She was a one-funneled, two-masted craft, English, with the house flag at the main truck, the red ensign at the main gaff where had been the "two-flag signal," but nothing at the fore truck. Aft the deck houses was a cheering crowd of passengers sprinkled with a few uniformed men, but the forward deck and bridge were deserted. As the boat pulled up on the lee side of the rolling steamer, a rope ladder was lowered, and up this Strong climbed, followed by his men, while the boat stood by waiting for orders.

An excited crowd of passengers surrounded him, and over the hubbub of explanation he heard a few articulate phrasings: "Officers killed." "Mutineers down forward." "A woman with them as hostage."

Then a uniformed engineer pushed toward him, and said:

"I am second in the engine room, sir. My chief was killed, along with the captain and first mate. The second, third, and fourth mates are in their bunks, wounded, and the ship is without a navigator, while the crew, firemen, and sailors are barricaded in the fore-castle with a woman, the wife of this man here, Mr. Wagner."

A portly, red-faced German stepped forward. He was well dressed and seemed to emanate an atmosphere of beer, schnapps, and groceries. But it was not this that aroused in Strong the overmastering sense of repulsion that backed him away from the German's extended hand.

"Ya-as," said Mr. Wagner, puffing vigorously at a black, fat cigar. "The scoundrels took mine wife with them into dot fore-castle, and they threaten to kill her if we rush the doors or we do not pass in grub. But she has her own little gun, and I think she shoot 'em if they get fresh."

Strong now explained to himself the reason of his aversion—the man's utter callousness and indifference to the predicament of his wife.

"How many are there?" he asked.

"Twenty—all told, sir," answered the engineer. "They have no arms, but killed the officers with handspikes, then tossed 'em overboard."

"It happened early in the morning," added the German, "and mine wife, who is an early riser, was on deck just in time to be grabbed."

"What was the cause of the mutiny?"

"Bad coal, bad grub, hard work, and hunger," answered the engineer. "It's a stingy line, this, and I was sorry for the men, but of course—mutiny? Well, I'm against that, and lent a hand driving them below."

"When did it happen?"

"Early this morning. We banked fires and waited. When your ship hove in sight we signaled."

Strong leaned over the rail, and called to the coxswain to go back, and report all well; then he said to the engineer:

"Start your fires with what force you have, and make steam."

Then he joined his men, who had mustered in the waist. The passengers, led by Mr. Wagner, followed, but he sent them back by a look and a few short words.

"Men," he said to his crew, "we must get twenty unarmed mutineers out of the fore-castle, and may have to batter in the doors. Pick up handspikes on the way forward, and be quiet until I investigate, as they have a lady passenger with them. They might harm her."

They softly went forward in his wake, their weapons sheathed, but each man carrying a handspike, or capstan bar—a six-foot club—and, descending the fore hatch with him, waited at his order in the "square," while he crept forward along a darkened passage to where the fore-castle door blocked his progress. Here he listened to the voices from within—rough, joking voices, mixed with one in a higher key, an angry, frightened woman's voice, saying: "I'll shoot if you come near me! I've told you before! Keep away from me!"

Strong banged on the door with his fist, then called to his men.

"I say, in there!" he shouted, when the voices were silent. "I'm a government officer with twelve armed men at my back. Open that door and submit to arrest, or we'll break it down. And if you harm that woman some of you will be killed at once. Open the door!"

A chorus of profanity and billingsgate answered him, and he motioned to his men. They crashed their clubs against the door, the noise of crackling wood drowning the uproar within, but not the sound of a pistol shot that rang out just before the door gave way and fell.

A disheveled woman with a smoking pistol sprang out, and Strong passed in, with his own pistol leveled at the unkempt crowd of men in the fore-castle. One man lay groaning on the floor, the rest stood around, with worried and angry faces. But the anger left them when the whole twelve

crowded in, each man waving a service revolver nearly a foot long, and a cutlass of three.

"Do you surrender?" asked Strong quietly.

"Of course," answered one sullenly. "What else can we do?"

"Pick up that man and carry him out," he ordered. Then to his men, he said: "Half of you go ahead, the other half follow them."

Out they trooped, well guarded, and followed by Strong. He mustered them amidships, left them under guard, and joined the group of passengers, stewards, and under officers.

"Is there a surgeon on board?" he asked. "There's a man shot."

But before he was answered, a disheveled, hysterical woman sprang toward him and seized his hands.

"Jack, oh, Jack, is this you?"

Then she flung both arms around his neck, kissed him, and sobbed his name. There was nothing recognizable in the broken, high-pitched voice; only when he had forcibly disengaged her arms and pushed her from him, did he recognize in the worn, wasted face of the woman a few traces of the beauty that had enslaved and tortured him for ten years. He was now thirty-three, she thirty-two. He could not speak at once; his tongue was dry and tight against the roof of his mouth, and his knees grew weak—so weak that he almost sagged down. But at last he found his voice.

"Nellie?" he said hoarsely.

"Yes, Jack. It's I. And, Jack——" She was about to go on when Mr. Wagner touched her on the shoulder.

"Here," he said dryly, "this may be all right some time, but not yet. I have charge of you yet, ain't it?"

She turned on him in fury.

"Oh, you——" She paused in the outburst of anger; then, as the passion left her face, added:

"I knew this man in childhood. I haven't seen him in years. He saved me from those men, while you, you cur, held back to save yourself. I have a right to talk to him."

Strong pulled himself together, and

said to the German: "She has that right. Respect it, sir, or answer to me."

Mr. Wagner assumed an amused smile and sauntered away, smoking vigorously, and Strong looked at the woman. Her face was flushed, and her eyes sank under his steady scrutiny.

"He's my husband, Jack," she said, and then, brokenly: "Oh, I know what you think of me. I almost swore just now, but, Jack, I swear every day at him. The life I've lived, and the trouble I've had. Oh, it's hell, Jack. Why didn't you play fair?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why didn't you write? I wrote to you. I knew I'd been mean, and wrote next day."

"You wrote to me," he exclaimed in amazement, as his mind flashed back to that walk and sleepless night. "Next day? I never got the letter."

"No, Jack?" she asked incredulously. "You didn't get it? Well, I feel better, even if I have——"

She was interrupted by the engineer, who told Strong that he had enough steam to "turn over."

"Very well," he answered. "Be ready when I give you the bells." Then to the woman he said: "I'll talk with you again, Nellie, but I must attend to things for a while."

He left her, smiling weakly at him, and sought his men, standing guard over the mutineers. He noticed that the wounded man was sitting on a "midship" bitt, and on inquiry learned that he was suffering only from a flesh wound in the leg.

He divided his twelve into two divisions, one for the sailors, one for the firemen, and subdivided these into port and starboard watches. They were to oversee the men in their watch on deck or in the fire hold, and lock them in their forecabin for the watch below. This settled, he sought the chart room, plotted a course from the last entry, and started the steamer on a course for Gibraltar. Then he took the bridge, and, with a man on guard at each stairway, to forestall the thanks and the gossip of the grateful passengers, he

remained through the waning day and the following night; for there was no sleep for him until he had adjusted himself to the new conditions. It was morning before he succeeded. Step by step he went back on an introspective tour to the parting in that parlor, weighing each emotion and its relation to immediate happenings, recalling, as he could, the eternal presence of the face and the voice, and analyzing thoroughly the remedy he had applied for their banishment. He could not understand it all, but reached a result.

"It wasn't love for her," he mused. "It was self-love, mainly, and love for an ideal, a physical ideal that has ceased to exist. And her letter—her letter that never arrived? Whatever it said it was as futile, it seems, as my poor appeal to her that day."

And with his boyhood love in the same limbo that contained his forgotten mathematics, and his heart further steeled against the wiles of woman, he busied himself for the rest of the passage with practical duties and the avoiding of Mrs. Wagner, who displayed a persevering intent to talk with him further. She did not succeed, though Strong, much against his will, listened to a talk she had with her husband. It was on the last day aboard; he had seen the pair approaching him when he had gone to the saloon to admonish a lazy steward, and had darted into a stateroom to hide from them. They entered the next, obviously, from the sounds filtering through the bulkhead, to pack up their belongings, and their voices sounded angry and high-pitched.

"What was he to you once?" asked the husband. "He is nothing now. He don't speak with you."

"On your account," she answered harshly, "on your account. What man of his kind would have use for a woman who could marry you?"

"For why did you marry me? Tell me—for why?"

"For your money, as I've told you before. I had him once, and didn't know enough to keep him. Then the old man lost the election, went broke, and died; then you came along, with

your two groceries, your three saloons, and your elegant social position. But I tell you"—her voice rose higher in her vehemence—"I tell you, that if Jack Strong would have me for his servant, his washwoman, I'd quit you to-day. If I could carry it through I'd dress as a man, to be with him. I'd be his slave rather than your wife. I thought he was dead or I'd never have become your wife, I tell you that."

"Well, you can quit when you like. I'll send you home."

"No, you won't. I'll quit you in regular form, with dower right and alimony secured. Here—here, I say, leave that out! It's mine!"

"You drink too much."

"Leave it out, I say! I want a drink now, and I'll want one again, soon."

Strong, sick of heart and soul, peered out, saw a clear field to the stairs, and escaped.

He saw them no more. They disembarked at Gibraltar, and when he had delivered the ship and her unruly crew to the authorities, he took his men by steamer to New York, where his own ship was bound, and where he found her, just arrived at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Also he found waiting for him a letter, delivered to the ship in the first mail, that had followed him around the world for a year and a half, and was covered with postmarks. Inclosed with it was another, but he read the opened sheet first. It was from his foster sister, Jennie, and contained many complaints of his coldness and indifference, and womanly news of her own affairs. Part of this news interested him. She wrote:

You remember the pretty picture you left? I kept it on the mantel for years, until it began to fade, and then packed it away for you whenever you made your mind up to come home. But I forgot all about a letter that came when you were sick, and that I placed behind the picture, intending to give it to you when you could read it. I inclose it. Do come home, Jack, and see my girl. She is grown up, and the best girl in the world. I've told her all about you, and she looks forward to meeting you—speaks of you as Jack, just as I always do. Of course, you remember Johnnie? He died

three years ago, and we two are alone. Please come and see us.

The other letter was faded with age, was addressed in a scrawling hand, and bore but one postmark. It read as follows:

DEAR JACK: Don't go away mad. I didn't mean it.
NELLIE.

Woman hater though he was, a lump came to his throat and tears to his eyes as the prankishness of fate was disclosed to him. Again he saw the bright little face, not mocking and derisive, but trusting and affectionate, and in bitter contrast with the face of the woman on the steamer. Then, gulping down the lump and drying the unaccustomed tears, he thought of the gentle and patient Jennie, who had befriended him, drawn him out of the jaws of death, and waited for his return. His conscience smote him heavily, and he wrote to Jennie that he would come at once.

He got leave and started home, nursing to its full this accusing conscience, but unable to quiet a rising thought that his conscience was not, after all, the real mainspring of his action. Down in his heart he knew that he wanted to see that picture—the only remnant of the ideal he had loved, that had ceased to exist in tangible form, and which, as was manifestly true, could never exist again.

He reached the little town where he had worked his way through high school, and again traversed the twelve-mile road—not afoot now, but in a closed carriage that hid his too conspicuous uniform—noticing point after point that recalled boyhood experiences, and softening under the memories until the whole agony of that night walk of sixteen years before came back to him.

And with his heart heavy as lead, and his face strained to the expression it wore that night, he dismissed the cabman and knocked at the door. It opened, and the living image of the younger Nellie sprang into his arms.

"Jack, oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, with her arms around his neck and her lips

to his face. "I'm Nellie. Don't you know I'm Nellie? Come in."

He came in, headfirst, nearly bearing the girl down with his weight; for his strength was taken from him. He faced about in the small hall, and held the girl at arms' length while he looked at her, feasting his eyes on the beautiful face, and drinking the beauty of it in to his love-famished soul.

"In the name of God, who are you?" he choked. "Nellie? The Nellie I knew?"

"Why, you must know me," she pouted, the smile leaving her face. "I'm Nellie, your niece—that is, I've always called you Uncle Jack."

"Oh," he breathed, realizing the truth, yet not yet able to assimilate it. "Jen's daughter. Forgive me. I did not suspect. You've grown up, of course, and then, I never saw you."

This inane explanation did not explain. The girl, still pouting, led him in to the old familiar living room, and there, on a couch, was Jennie, older and evidently ill, but with the same genial smile. A gray-haired man stood by, whom he knew as the doctor of his sickness, and he greeted them both, as he could, in his still bewildered state of mind.

"Jen," he said, when conversation permitted. "You spoke of that old photograph I left here. Got it yet?"

"Yes, Jack. It's upstairs in the old trunk. Want it? Nellie, run up and get it—way down to the bottom."

"Always suspected, Jack," said the doctor, "that that picture had something to do with the mental shock you received. Love affair, wasn't it?"

"It was," answered Strong. "Very serious at the time, though I thought I'd got over it. However, wait till the picture comes. It'll surprise you, I think."

"I haven't looked at it since Nellie was seven years old," said Jennie, "but I remember how I used to sit and stare at it after you left and before Nellie was born. So you were in love with that girl, Jack? Well, I loved her myself, I remember, though I've forgotten how she looked."

A little scream on the stairs startled them, and Nellie ran in holding the picture toward the light.

"It's my picture, mother!" she cried. "When did I have this taken?"

The doctor took it from her.

"You say," he said to Jennie, "that you studied this picture closely, and, as you say, fell in love with it just before Nellie was born?"

"Yes, I did. Let me see it."

She took it, looked at it, and handed it to Jack.

"It's just like her," she said. "Isn't it strange?"

"Not at all," said the doctor. "Not

strange at all, though uncommon, and extremely interesting. A case of prenatal influence. You marked, as you say, your unborn daughter with the features of a girl you never saw. Nellie, that picture wasn't taken from you. You were taken from the picture."

"And," said Jack, "she has the figure and the voice as well. Nellie," he added, laying down the picture and standing up, "your mother has given me the girl that I loved, and lost. Come here."

There were command and ownership in his voice. She came to him, and he gathered her into his arms.

